



YOUTH COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS BUREAU STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Procedure No.: YCC 60-14	Subject: INDEPENDENT LIVING
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Applicable ACA Standards: 2-7013	Revision Date: 03-03, 01-09-06, 11-23-07, 10-10-08, 08-17-09
Signature: /s/ Karen Duncan	Effective Date: 12-31-02
Signature: /s/ Steve Gibson	

I. BUREAU DIRECTIVE:

Youth Community Corrections (YCC) Bureau employees will follow consistent criteria and standards when considering youth for placement on independent living. Youth placed on independent living must be appropriately prepared and suited to live independent of direct adult supervision. This procedure will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

II. DEFINITIONS:

Great Falls Youth Transition Centers - are operated by the Department of Corrections, Youth Services Division and provide separate housing for males and females. The program focuses on youth who are having a difficult time adjusting in the community after being released from a secure facility. The program allows a graduated sanction option other than sending a youth back to a correctional facility. It is also used for youth who are leaving a secure facility when another appropriate placement is not available, or when the youth needs a short-term placement while awaiting another community placement

Mentor - an adult person approved according to the Volunteer Policy (YCC 1.3.16) or be employed by a DOC contractor. Mentors may include, but not be limited to, educators, employers, counselors, church affiliates, relatives, or family friends who demonstrate pro-social qualities, and are committed to working with youth. The mentor may provide educational assistance, support, or motivation to youth on an individual or group basis

Primary Officer - the juvenile parole officer with jurisdiction in the county where the youth's parent(s), guardian(s), custodian(s), or their representative(s) resides. In most instances this will be in the county of commitment. The primary officer is responsible for case planning for the youth while under supervision

Supervising Juvenile Parole Officer - the officer who will supervise the youth in the community where, the youth is placed, including independent living placement.

Youth Correctional Facility - the Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility, Riverside Youth Correctional Facility, or any other contracted Secure Youth Correctional Facility.

III. PROCEDURES:

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A. Youth Placement

Most youth released to, or on, parole supervision will reside in a Youth Transition Center (YTC), the home of a parent, relative or guardian, in a licensed youth care facility, or licensed foster home. When these placement options are not available to a youth and/or a youth demonstrates that he/she has the ability, maturity and resources to function without immediate adult supervision, independent living placement may be considered.

In those cases the Youth Services Division (YSD), YTC or youth correctional facility staff will take into consideration the safety of the community and the youth prior to approving an independent living placement.

B. Youth Legal Rights

Youth under age 18 cannot legally sign/enter into contracts such as a rental agreement/lease without the co-signature of an adult. YSD staff shall not co-sign for rental or lease agreements, loans, or other binding financial or legal contracts in order to place a youth on independent living.

C. Youth Eligibility for Independent Living

In order for a youth to be considered for independent living the following criteria must be considered:

1. The youth must be at least 16 years of age and should have successfully completed a transitional living program or been under parole supervision for a minimum of 3 months from his/her last release from a state correctional facility. The youth's behavior under the most recent period of parole supervision or in a YTC must have been without any significant or chronic parole violations including, but not limited to, curfew or residence violations, positive urinalysis results, and any criminal offenses. In order to be considered for independent living, the youth in question cannot have violations of the sort listed within the three months before the request.
2. Youth residing in a youth correctional facility or residential placement may be eligible provided they have maintained three or more months at the highest level of the Pine Hills Earned Incentive Program, Riverside Level System, residential placement treatment/behavioral program and/or have had no major adjustment problems during the same time period. They must have made positive treatment progress, and an independent living placement is the most appropriate placement that meets the youth's supervision needs.
3. The youth must be participating in educational programming such as GED, regular or alternative schooling. Youth who have completed one of these educational

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requirements will be expected to maintain full-time employment unless enrolled in college or Vo-Tech programming.

4. The youth must have ongoing monthly financial resources to adequately provide for his/her basic living needs including food, residence, and normal living expenses such as clothing, transportation, recreation, and medical expenses.
5. These earnings may include employment, Social Security benefits, child support payment and temporary assistance provided by the Department.
6. The youth, if qualified, must be approved for mentoring services by the Tumbleweed Program, if available, or through Mountain Peaks, Inc., and must be actively participating in these programs.
7. The youth must have an identified and approved adult mentor (not a Juvenile Parole Officer) with whom to make weekly contacts regarding his/her ongoing progress on independent living. Mentors shall be approved according to the procedures in [YCC 1.3.16, Volunteer Services](#), complete a [Background Check Request \[YCC 60-14 \(C\)\]](#) and an [Authorization to Release Information \[YCC 60-14 \(D\)\]](#). This mentor may be the same person under the Tumbleweed Program or Mountain Peaks, Inc.

D. Independent Living Placement Procedures

1. At least 30 days prior to release from a residential placement, a YTC, or youth correctional facility, a [Field Investigation Request \[YCC 60-2 \(A\)\]](#) is submitted to the primary juvenile parole officer (JPO) by the Director of the YTC or facility case manager/counselor. If a JPO other than the primary officer will supervise the youth, a copy of the field investigation will also be sent to the officer who will be supervising the youth. In these cases, the primary parole officer and courtesy supervising parole officer will work together to investigate the placement and develop the independent living plan and parole conditions.
 - a. Youth may be placed on independent living from parole status in the field. In these cases no field investigation is required; however, the JPO must document the investigation and contacts in the youth's chronological history.
2. The supervising JPO will investigate per [YCC 60-2, Field Investigation Request, III, 2 & 3](#), including conducting [Background Checks \[YCC 60-14 \(C\)\]](#) of the individuals sharing the residence. Independent living candidates shall not share housing with individuals currently under county or state youth or adult supervision. This investigation must include contacts with the juvenile probation

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office from the county of commitment and when applicable, the local juvenile probation office if the youth will be placed from another county of commitment.

3. The youth's parent/guardian, if available, must approve the independent living plan and a plan for medical emergencies and other significant issues by completing form [YCC 60-14 \(A\), Independent Living Parental Agreement](#).
4. The supervising JPO shall converse with the YCC Bureau Chief for review and approval of the independent living request upon completion of the investigation.
 - a. In independent living investigations from a residential placement, correctional facility or YTC, the supervising JPO will submit the [Field Investigation Request \[YCC 60-2\(A\)\]](#) to the YCC Bureau Chief for review and signature.
 - b. The YCC Bureau Chief will write the approval or denial in the comment section at the bottom of the form including his/her signature and the date. If the plan is approved, the supervising juvenile parole officer completes the [Field Investigation Request \[YCC 60-2 \(A\)\]](#) and returns it to the YTC or correctional facility. It is not necessary to return the form to a residential placement facility but written notice will be given to the case manager regarding the placement plan.
 - c. When a youth will be supervised in a region other than the region of commitment, the JPOs from both regions will staff the case before approval is granted.
5. When the independent living plan is approved, the primary JPO will notify the committing Youth Court Judge of independent living plan using form [YCC 60-14 \(B\), Youth Court Notification of Independent Living](#). A copy will be sent to the juvenile probation officer.
6. Youth placed on independent living will be placed on maximum Supervision for at least six months (or if less time remains before discharge, place on maximum supervision until discharge) to closely monitor the youth's adjustment and compliance on independent living status.
7. The supervising JPO will review independent living cases with the YCC Bureau Chief and document these reviews in the youth's chronological history as per procedure [YCC 60-1, Case Management Overview](#).

IV. CLOSING:

Questions concerning this procedure shall be addressed to the Youth Community Corrections Bureau Chief.

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V. REFERENCES:

[52-2-604, MCA](#) *Transfer of Custody to Private Agency - Reports*
[52-5-127, MCA](#) *Control Over Youth Under Parole Agreement*
[53-1-203, MCA](#) *Powers and Duties of the Department*

VI. ATTACHMENTS:

[YCC 60-14 \(A\) Independent Living Parental Agreement](#)
[YCC 60-14 \(B\) Youth Court Notification of Independent Living](#)
[YCC 60-14 \(C\) Background Check Request](#)
[YCC 60-14 \(D\) Applicant's Authorization to Release Information](#)